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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 ADP-00 EB-11 AID-20 PM-07 NSC-10

SS-15 RSC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03

USIA-15 PRS-01 NIC-01 SCEM-02 INT-08 RSR-01 /154 W
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R 280850Z JUL 73
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5835
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY LONDON 2589
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 1058
AMCONSUL MADRAS 9257

C O N F I D E N TV I A L NEW DELHI 8737

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, EGEN, IN, UR
SUBJ: HIGH LEVEL INDIAN VISITORS TO THE USSR

REF: (A) NEW DELHI 7595, (B) MOSCOW 8862

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE INDIAN PETROLEUM, INFORMATION, AND DEFENSE MINISTERS AND OTHER HIGH OFFICIALS HAVE RECENTLY VISITED THE SOVIET UNION. THE TRIPS PRODUCED LOW-KEY REAFFIRMATION ON THE CONTINUING CLOSE RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND THE USSR FOLLOWING SOME ANXIETY HERE OVER THE WASHINGTON SUMMIT. THE CONCRETE RESULTS OF THIS ACTIVITY APPEAR TO BE SOVIET COMMITMENTS TO A VISIT TO INDIA BY BREZHNEV AND POSSIBLY INCREASED SOVIET ASSISTANCE TO KEY INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS, INCLUDING THE MATHURA REFINERY. END SUMMARY.

1. A NUMBER OF TOP INDIAN OFFICIALS VISITED THE USSR IN EARLY JULY. WHILE THE TIMING OF THESE TRIPS WAS NOT
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SYNCHRONIZED OR DIRECTLY RELATED TO BREZHNEV'S RETURN FROM

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WASHINGTON, THEY APPEARED, CUMULATIVELY, TO HIGHLIGHT
A DESIRE ON THE PART OF BOTH INDIA AND THE SOVIET UNION TO
REAFFIRM THE CLOSE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES
FOLLOWING THE WASHINGTON SUMMIT. AS WE HAVE REPORTED
EARLIER, THE SUMMIT STIRRED UP SOME ANXIETY HERE ABOUT THE
USSR'S COMMITMENTS TO INDIA (REF A).

2. CONGRESS PARTY PRESIDENT SHARMA SPENT TEN DAYS IN THE
USSR ON A TRIP THAT TOOK HIM TO AUSTRIA, BRITAIN, AND ITALY
AS WELL. FOLLOWING A THREE-HOUR TALK WITH BREZHNEV ON
JULY 3, SHARMA SAID HE WAS IMPRESSED BY THE SOVIET LEADER'S
WARMTH TOWARD INDIA: BREZHNEV HAD PRAISED INDIA'S POLICIES
AND THE LEADERSHIP OF MRS. GANDHI.

3. MINISTER FOR INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING GUJRAL VISITED
MOSCOW IN CONNECTION WITH THE MOSCOW FILM FESTIVAL AND
SIGNED A PROTOCOL FOR JOINT INDO-SOVIET PRODUCTION OF
FILMS AND AN EXCHANGE OF TELEVISION PROGRAMS.

4. ON HIS RETURN FROM MOSCOW JULY 21, PETROLEUM MINISTER BAROOAH
SAID HE HAD SIGNED A PROTOCOL FOR SUPPLY BY THE SOVIETS
OF CERTAIN EQUIPMENT FOR THE MATHURA PETROLEUM REFINERY
THAT CANNOT BE MANUFACTURED IN INDIA. DELIVERIES ARE
TO BE MADE BEFORE THE END OF 19;77 AGAINST EXISTING
SOVIET CREDITS. BAROOAH IMPLIED THE SOVIETS MIGHT ALSO
SUPPLY STEEL FOR FABRICATING SOME OF THE EQUIPMENT IN
INDIA. HE ALSO DISCUSSED WITH SOVIET GEOLOGISTS THE
QUESTION OF INTENSIFYING OIL SURVEYS IN INDIA.

5. HEAVY INDUSTRIES SECRETARY SONDHI IS IN MOSCOW THIS
WEEK DISCUSSING THE SUPPLY OF EQUIPMENT FOR THE BOKARO
STEEL PLANT AND COMPONENTS FOR OTHER INDIAN PLANTS.

6. FINALLY, DEFENSE MINISTER RAM, ACCOMPANIED BY DEFENSE
SECRETARY NARAIN, VISITED THE USSR JULY 8-18. ALTHOUGH
THE PRESS HERE HAD SPECULATED THAT HE WAS GOING TO ASK FOR
ADDITIONAL ARMS BECAUSE OF THE ARMS BUILD-UP IN IRAN, RAM
SAID AFTER HE LEFT THE SOVIET UNION THAT HIS VISIT WAS
NOT CONNECTED WITH ARMS PURCHASES. THE INDIAN PRESS
SAID RAM HAD WIDE RANGING TALKS WITH GRECHKO AND KOSYGIN
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IN WHICH THE SOVIETS HAD APPRECIATED INDIA'S POSITION ON THE
QUESTIONS DISCUSSED, INCLUDING IRANIAN ARMS, AND SPECULATION ABOUT
SLIGHT DIFFERENCES OF VIEWS HAD BEEN COMPLETELY DISPELLED;
RAM WAS INFORMED THAT BREZHNEV AND KOSYGIN HAD AGREED TO
VISIT INDIA BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR AND
THAT GRECHKO PLANNED TO COME AT LATER DATE.

7. THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY JOINT SECRETARY FOR

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EASTERN EUROPE TOLD THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR THAT RAM HAD NOT ENGAGED IN ANY NEGOTIATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL ARMS IN MOSCOW. INDIA COULD NOT AFFORD ANY MAJOR NEW ARMS PURCHASES BUT WOULD BE INTERESTED IN SOME MODEST OF ITS CURRENT EQUIPMENT AND THERE HAD BEEN SEVERAL DISCUSSIONS ALONG THESE LINES. HE SAID THE SOVIETS HAD AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO A VISIT BY BREZHVEN AND KOSYGIN BUT HE WAS VAGUE ON THE TIMING OF SUCH A VISIT. HE ALLEGED THAT SOVIET DELIVERIES FOR THE MATHURA REFINERY AND THE EXPANSION OF THE TWO SOVIET-BUILT STEEL MILLS, TOGETHER WITH SUPPLY OF OTHER STEEL PRODUCTS THE SOVIETS HAD AGREED TO PROVIDE, WOULD EXHAUST THE LARGE SOVIET CREDITS NOW OUTSTANDING. (THE EMBASSY IS SKEPTICAL OF THIS CLAIM.) ARMS SALES, OF COURSE, ARE COVERED UNDER A SEPARATE ACCOUNT. HE FINALLY NOTED IN PASSING THAT THE SOVIETS HAD INVITED RAM TO STAY FOR A MONTH AND THAT A CONSIDERABLE PORTION OF HIS STAY HAD ACTUALLY BEEN VACATION.

8. COMMENT: WE REGARD THESE VISITS AS NORMAL IN THE CONTEXT OF INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS, PARTICULARLY SINCE THERE WAS LITTLE HIGH-LEVEL VISITING BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES THE FIRST HALF OF THE YEAR. MRS. GANDHI'S AGGRIEVED STATEMENTS ABOUT THE US-SOVIET SUMMIT MAY HAVE BEEN A CALCULATED PRELUDE. THE INDIANS ARE EXPERTS IN THE POLITICS OF AGGRIEVEMENT AND MRS. GANDHI MAY HAVE BEEN SETTING THE SOVIETS UP TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR FRIENDSHIP AND CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO INDIA IN CONCRETE TERMS.
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